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Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Written statement* submitted by the Society for Threatened Peoples, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[26 May 2014]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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Humanitarian and Human Rights Situation in Sudan

Armed conflicts in the Darfur regions in western Sudan have escalated in the year 2014. Eleven years after the crimes against humanity started in western Sudan, tens of thousands of people were displaced after attacks by the paramilitary Rapid Security Forces (RSF). This militia has been armed by the Sudanese army in the year 2013 to assist state authorities in fighting the armed rebellion in South Kordofan state. After failing to crush the rebellion in the Nuba Mountains the militia returned to western Sudan in January and February 2014 and has caused widespread terror among the civilian population. The local population perceives the RSF as the "new Janjaweed" threat, remembering the deliberate killings by Janjaweed militias in the years 2004 / 2005 in Darfur. Sudanese state authorities have to ensure an immediate disarmament of RSF, should end impunity and guarantee the respect of basic human rights by militia fighters.

At the end of February 2014 in a short period of only 14 days some 60 villages in North and South Darfur were attacked by RSF and more than 130,000 people were forced to flee their villages and sought protection in camps for internally displaced people (IDP). In the first five months of the year 2014, the civilian population in Darfur has experienced more displacement than in any single year since the height of the Darfur conflict in the year 2004. Since January 2014, some 300,000 Darfuris were forced to flee and some 160 villages have been attacked by militias. In the year 2013, some 380,000 people were displaced in western Sudan.

The IDP camps were overwhelmed by the influx of many people in desperate need for humanitarian assistance. Poor hygiene and sanitation facilities and a lack of medical equipment have caused massive health risks in the camps. Malaria, diarrhoea, skin diseases and eye infections were widespread, especially among the children who were under five years old. Some 70 percent of the IDP are less than 18 years old.

Continued air raids by the Sudanese Air Force against villages in the Jebel Mara Mountains have caused terror and confusion among the civilian population. Satellite photos have documented that hundreds of huts were destroyed by bombings. Despite continuous appeals of the UN Security Council to end targeting the civilian population by air raids, the Sudanese forces have been continuing their bombing campaign causing the death of dozens of civilians, among them many children.

The deliberate ground attacks on villages by RSF and other militias were accompanied by rapes, looting, kidnappings, killings and other massive human rights violations. Leading representatives of civil society organizations in Darfur have condemned the human rights violations and addressed a memorandum to President Omar Hassan al Bashir, state governors and the Sudanese parliament, urging an immediate cessation of the hostilities as well as full and free access for aid agencies to the civilian population.

Society for Threatened Peoples is deeply concerned about continued limitations of humanitarian access imposed by Sudanese authorities. Instead of supporting the relentless relief efforts of international aid agencies, the Sudanese authorities are intimidating humanitarian organizations and deliberately denying them access to IDP camps. The suspension of the activities of the "International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)" in February 2014, of the French NGO "ACTED" in March 2014 and of the British NGO "Merlin" in April 2014 by the Sudanese authorities had a disastrous effect on the relief assistance to people in need. Furthermore, many other NGOs have experienced restrictions on their humanitarian activities in IDP camps. Despite a desperate need of humanitarian relief, the official Humanitarian Aid Commission has been urging numerous aid agencies to stop their activities in crisis regions of Darfur.

We are very much concerned about ongoing air raids and fighting in South Kordofan and Blue Nile. Air attacks on churches, hospitals and markets have caused tremendous pain and fear among the civilian population and have provoked an exodus from many villages. Despite repeated calls by the UN Security Council and the international community, Sudan still blocks humanitarian access to the civilian population living under the control of SPLM-North in conflict areas. The deliberate denial of humanitarian access is a crime against humanity and must stop immediately.

Society for Threatened Peoples calls on the UN Human Rights Council to urge the Government of Sudan to:

- Immediately stop air raids on civilian villages;
- Allow for free and unhindered access for aid agencies to the civilian population in all conflict areas and IDP camps;
- End the suspension of humanitarian NGOs providing relief to IDP camps;
- Disarm the paramilitary Rapid Security Forces (RSF);
- Ensure a better protection of the civilian population, especially to prevent politically motivated rapes in Darfur;
- End impunity and to ensure that basic human rights are respected by the authorities and their militias.